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**THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY** is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen). It is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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**PLEASE NOTE.** We would like to clarify our use of the word 'He' when referring to the 'Eternal,' the 'Cosmic Buddha,' the 'Dharmakaya,' 'Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva' etc. Whenever 'He' is used, understand that what is meant is 'He/She/It.' We simplify our usage in this way so that the continuity of the articles is not repeatedly broken up by the form 'He/She/It,' and also because we have not yet found another word which conveys the complete meaning.

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# Contents.

News From the Tiger's Lair Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C.....	2
I am Glad to be a (human) Animal Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy, M.O.B.C.....	13
The Rich Man's Son Rev. Fristan Skinner.....	27
Congregation Day 1993.....	32
News.....	34
Reading Buddhist Priory.....	37

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# News from the Tiger's Lair

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## New Translations

As I am sure most of our readers know, there is much more ceremonial used in training temples of the Sōtō Zen Church than the laity attend, such ceremonies being exclusively monastic. These ceremonies, however, frequently use Scriptures which are of great value in training whilst not being at all well known by the average lay Buddhist. Over the years I have felt that the laity might profit greatly from a knowledge of these Scriptures, and so Rev. Hubert Nearman (Dr. Mark J Nearman) has been translating them, with me as editor and consultant. In the next few issues of the *Journal* I hope to introduce these Scriptures to our readers; it should be understood that all of them are included in the official list of Scriptures of the Sōtō Zen Church of Japan and, of course, also of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives. This list is to be found in the official rule book of the Head Office of the Sōtō Zen Church of Japan. What follows is a translation from the Chinese of Kumarajiva [344-413] of *The Scripture of the Buddha's Last Teachings*.

There are at least three other texts that will appear over the next few months two of which are extremely long and will be put into the *Journal* in sections. This particular Scripture, which shows the Buddha's emphasis on the Precepts right up to the time of His death, I feel to be especially important since it would seem that some students of Zen in this country do not realise that the Precepts are the first, the middle and the last and, at all times, the most important teachings of Buddhism.

P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett.

# The Scripture of the Buddha's Last Teachings.

Rev. Hubert Nearman, O.B.C., translator.

Rev. P.T.N.H.Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C.,

Consultant and Editor.

From the time when Shakyamuni first turned the Wheel of the Dharma to ferry Ajnata Kaundinya to the Other Shore until the last time He gave voice to the Dharma to carry Subhadra there, those responsive to being ferried had all been taken across and now He lay among the four twin sala trees about to enter parinirvana. At midnight when all was calm and not a sound was heard, He gave a summary explanation of the essentials of the Dharma to His disciples:

"O you monks, after I enter into eternal meditation, you should deeply honour, esteem and revere as precious the Ten Great and the Forty-eight Less Grave Precepts; just as darkness encounters brightness or a destitute person receives a treasure, so you should recognize these as your Great Teachers; whilst I abided in this world there were indeed none different from These for me. Those of you who keep to these Pure Precepts are not to go about seeking to deal in commerce, barter or sale, or to live secure in field and home tending and nurturing family, clan, servants and animals; you should stay clear of any other kinds of profiteering and treasure hunting as if you were avoiding the fiery pit itself. Do not go about wantonly destroying or trampling down the vegetation, clearing the land and digging up the soil literally or figuratively. You should not mix and blend potions and nostrums, engage in forecasting fortune or misfortune, stare up at the positions of the stars and planets to infer how you should go forth based on their waxing and waning or make up calendars to try to compute and fix the future. When regulating the body, eat wholesome foods for self-sustenance. Do not go about participating in worldly affairs by circulating your-



self as a messenger, do not engage in sorcery in search of some elixir of eternal life, seek to be intimate with people of influence and position or be close with those who treat others rudely or with contempt; none of these should you do. With an upright heart and appropriate thoughts you should seek to ferry others to the Other Shore. Do not go about trying to conceal your faults and shortcomings or display how different you are from deluded creatures. In making the four offerings which are your joy in awakening your heart, your reverence for the Dharma, your resolve to train and your practice, know your capacity and be content with that. Be quick to go about doing services and work but do not seek to amass tasks; these guides summarize the characteristics of keeping to the Precepts. The Precepts are what is appropriate to, and in accord with, the foundation and source of liberation, this is why they are called the Pratimokshas or what leads one toward liberation, accordingly, these Precepts can beget various meditations and the wisdom that eradicates suffering. O monks, keep to these Pure Precepts without giving others cause to slander you. If you can keep to these Pure Precepts you should know that this can have spiritual benefits for self and others; for those who do not have the Precepts, all goodness, merits and virtues cannot produce for them what they need to know. The Precepts are foremost for well-being, the abiding place of merit and virtue.

O you monks, since you can already abide in the Precepts, you should work on regulating your five senses; do not wantonly enter into the desires that arise from them. You are, for example, just as an ox-herder who holds his staff in hand and need but show it to his ox. Do not indulge in idleness, letting that which does not keep to the Precepts sow its seeds and grow its crops for, if you indulge your five senses, not only will your desires, which know no bounds, be ungovernable, they will also be as an unruly horse that, uncontrolled by a bridle, threatens to drag the trainer along until he tumbles into some hole. As if a kalpa's worth of injury and pain would come to an end in one lifetime! The calamities and misfortunes created by the thieving done by the five senses stretches from generation to generation; because their harm is exceedingly heavy, great caution is necessary. Wise is the one who is the

governor and regulator of his senses and not their follower; treat them as though they were thieves; do not let them indulge in indolence and evasiveness. If you let them indulge themselves, they will soon enough see to their own obliteration for the Lord and master of these five senses is the discriminatory mind, therefore you should govern your mind well. The evasiveness of the discriminatory mind goes far beyond the dreadfulfulness of poisonous serpents, fierce beasts, ruthless robbers or blazing infernos, yet is not enough merely to instruct it through metaphors for it is just like someone with a handful of honey who wheels about recklessly whilst focusing on the honey and fails to see the deep pit before him. It is like a crazed elephant without any restraints or like a monkey who has taken to the trees and prances about, leaping and jumping; only difficulties and suffering can constrain it; you should hasten to damp its ardour and not give it license to be indulgent for someone who indulges his mind loses his good practices. Govern it in a single situation and there will not be any affair you will be unable to manage; therefore, o monks, you should be diligent and skilfully progress by bending that discriminatory mind of yours to submission.

O you monks, when receiving food or drink you should look upon it as upon the ingesting of medicine; do not give rise to fluctuations in judgment by weighing it on the scales of good and bad. Be prompt to ingest it as a support for your body which removes hunger and thirst, at the same time be as the honeybee who, whilst gathering pollen from a flower, only takes the nectar and does not spoil or destroy the flower's colour, shape or scent. When receiving an offering from another, partake of it whilst ridding yourself of any feelings of irritation and dislike; to feel that you have not got very much, and therefore seek after more, destroys the good-hearted intention of the donor. It is just the same as with the shrewd person who measures the strength of an ox by how much it can bear and does not go to excess so that he wears out its strength.

O you monks, during the daytime practice the good Teachings with a diligent heart for there is no time to lose; the early evening and early morning should not be wasted. If you recite the Scriptures in the middle of the night,



expend your breath by yourself; do not doze off and let your eyes close lest you allow your whole life to pass in vain without realization. Be mindful that the fires of impermanence incinerate all worlds so be quick in seeking to ferry yourself to the Other Shore and do not doze off, letting your eyes indeed close. The defiling passions rob, continuously waylay and slay people; they are far worse than a household filled with resentful people. How can you afford to doze off? You must arouse yourself and waken from your slumber; a defiling passion is a poisonous serpent asleep in your heart; it is like having a black viper in your room whilst you sleep. You must quickly snare this serpent by keeping to the Precepts, drive it off and remove it from your room; once the somnolent serpent has departed, you can sleep peacefully and in safety. If it does not depart and you close your eyes to it, you are the same as a person who lacks true modesty, that is you will lack awareness of your susceptibilities and remorse for your shortcomings, for, of all things splendrous, modesty is foremost; it is as a cast-iron restraint which can restrain others without recourse to any other thing. O monks, you should always act with a modest heart without neglecting it even for a short while; if you separate yourself from your feelings of modesty then you lose merit and virtue. When there are people who are modest then there will be good Teaching; if people lack modesty, there is no difference between them and birds or beasts.

O you monks, if someone should come to dismember your every joint, you should pacify your heart, not glare angrily or hatefully at the person, guard your mouth and refrain from spouting hot words of hate. If you indulge in a raging or resentful heart then you make yourself an obstacle in your own path and lose the benefits of your merit and virtue; forbear for virtue's sake and keep to the Precepts for, if you act in this way, you reach what seems impossible. The one who can behave with forbearance is called a great and powerful person. If there are those who can not be joyful and delight in others, forbearance will accept the poison of their malice and curses as a person drinking the Sweet Dew. He or she who, namelessly entering the Way, is indeed the one with discriminate wisdom. Why is this? Because the mischief from anger, hatred and



resentment can break one's own Teachings and destroy another's reputation so that now, and in the future, people will not be delighted to meet them or you. You should realize that an angry heart depends on a fierce flame, so be on your guard, without crossing over into anger and resentment, lest you let these thieves of kalpas of merit and virtue gain entrance. When common folk embrace their greeds they are people who walk not in the Way; they lack the Teaching to restrain themselves so that their anger can still harbour resentment and find fault with others. When monks walk in the Way they are people who do not hanker after things so that attachments, which give rise to anger and resentment, become all but impossible. Just as one who, at the first sound of thunder amidst the chill and bracing clouds, starts up a fire, it is not fitting to enkindle anger at the first signs of coldness or trouble.

O you monks, you should polish your heads and, having relinquished ornaments and other adornments, wear appropriate robes of a subdued colour; holding a suitable vessel in your hands, beg alms for your livelihood. Look at yourself in the following way. If arrogance or pride arise you should quickly eradicate them; arrogance and pride are not seemly even for common folk who follow worldly ways so how much less are they seemly for a person who has left home to enter the Way. Will you yield yourself to those attitudes when you go forth to beg alms for the sake of liberation?

O you monks, the mind that is flattering and fawning acts contrary to the Way, therefore keep your heart honest and forthright for you should realize that flattery and fawning are merely done for the sake of imposing on others or making fools of them. O monks, maintain an upright heart which will serve you as the foundation for honesty and forthrightness.

O you monks, recognise the person who has many cravings; his misery and troubles are many because he seeks for many benefits, gains and advantages. The person of few cravings is free from seeking after things or yearning for them, hence he is free of such sufferings; he desires little, only esteeming what is fitting for his spiritual

training and practice; by desiring little, so much more is he able to bring forth fine merits and virtues. The person of few desires is free of flattery and fawning when searching out the intentions of others. The heart of someone who behaves with few desires is, as a consequence, composed and free from gloom, anxiety, sorrow or fear; when coming in contact with things, he finds a surplus for there is never an insufficiency. The one who has few desires has Nirvana for this is the name for 'having few desires'.

O you monks, if you wish to be free from miseries and woes, look into contentment which is synonymous with knowing what is enough; the Teaching of contentment is none other than the location of true wealth, ease, security and peace. The person who is contented, though he sleeps upon the bare ground, is still at ease and satisfied; someone who is discontented, even if he were ensconced in a celestial palace, would still not find this tallying with his ideas and tastes. The one who is discontented, though rich, is poor; the person who is contented, though poor, is rich. The one who is discontented always does what his five desires latch onto; he does that which causes grief to, and arouses the compassionate pity of, one who is contented. This is what I mean by the term 'contentment'.

O you monks, if you seek to be tranquil and quiet, liberated from the insistence of the defiling passions, at ease and content, then you should part company with confusion and bustle and dwell at your ease in some solitary place. The person who dwells in quietude continually forsakes what those in the heavens esteem so highly amongst themselves, therefore withdraw from those about you, as well as from other crowds, and, in a place of solitude apart from them, reflect on the source of the eradication of suffering at your leisure. If you are one who enjoys the company of others then you will take on the woes of their company, just as with a flock of birds that gather in some huge tree, there is the lament of dead branches breaking off under their weight. When the world binds itself around us, we drown in the suffering of such company just as an old elephant, sunk down in the mire, is unable to drag himself out.



O you monks, if you are diligent in your devotion to progress, training will not be difficult for you, therefore be diligent and devote yourselves to progress just as a small stream, ever flowing, can bore holes in rocks. If the mind of the trainee is often inattentive and remiss, it will be just the same as making a fire by friction and blowing on it before it is hot enough to catch ablaze; although your desire to train can blaze up, the fires of training are hard to arrive at. This is what I call 'devotion to progress'.

O you monks, seek fine understanding, search out good assistance and do not neglect being mindful. If you are one who does not neglect mindfulness, the thieves of passional defilement will not be able to enter, therefore, you monks, always keep your minds alert, for the one who loses mindfulness loses his merits and virtues. When the strength of your mindfulness is constant and vigourous, though the five desires would break in to rob you, they will do you no harm; you will be as one who puts on armour before entering a battle and will have nothing to fear. This is what I call 'not neglecting mindfulness'.

O you monks, when your mind is kept alert, then you are in meditation; because your mind is in meditation, you are able to know the world, birth and death, as well as the characteristics of all things, therefore you monks should always study and practice the ways of meditation with finest diligence. When you achieve meditation, your heart is not in turmoil or your mind scattered; just as a household that would be frugal with water arranges dikes and pond banks carefully, so a trainee does likewise. Therefore, for the sake of the water of discriminate wisdom, practice meditation well that you may prevent the loss of that water through leaks caused by the defiling passions. This is what I call 'doing meditation'.

O you monks, when you have discriminate wisdom, you will not be attached to desires; by constant self-reflection and watching what you do, you will not bring about any loss through the defiling passions; within My Teachings this is what can bring you to liberation. If someone denies this, not only is he not a person of the Way, he is also not an ordinary, every-day person either; indeed, there is no name

for such a one. Genuine discriminate wisdom is the sturdy craft that ferries others across the sea of old age, disease and death; it is also a great bright lamp for the darkness of ignorance, a wonderful curative for all disease and suffering. It is a sharp axe for felling the trees of defiling passions, therefore you monks should improve yourselves by means of this wisdom which you attain through hearing, thinking about and putting into practice My Teachings. When someone has the radiance of this wisdom then, though he be blind, he will clearly see what people are. This is what 'discriminating wisdom' is.

O you monks, if your mind plays around with all kinds of theories and opinions it will be confused and in disorder and, though you have left home to be a monk, you have still not yet realized liberation; therefore, o monks, quickly abandon your disordered mind and your playing around with your theories and notions. If you wish to enjoy the pleasure that comes from calmness and the extinction of defiling passions, thoroughly eliminate the affliction of playing around in your head. This is what I mean by 'not playing around with theories and opinions'.

O you monks, you should wholeheartedly discard all forms of looseness and self-indulgence in favour of merits and virtues just as you would keep away from a malicious thief. What the World-honoured One desires with His great compassion is to benefit all by means of their ultimate realization of their identity with Buddha. Be it deep in the mountains, in an uninhabited valley or under some tree, your place of seclusion is your abode of peace. Keep in mind what you have received of the Teachings; do not let yourself be forgetful of Them and thereby lose Them; always be as diligent as possible in your practice and mastery of Them; the unreality of the unconditioned after death spawns gloom and regret. Like a good physician, I understand illness and prescribe curatives for you to take; not to take them is not the doctor's fault. I also resemble a skilled guide who leads others to a clear pathway; not to heed him and not to travel the path is not the mistake of the guide. If you, in your sufferings, have any doubts about the Four Noble Truths, you can forthwith ask Me about them



for, to fail to eradicate your doubts, is indeed to fail to seek for certainty."

The World-honoured One then made this same offer twice again but, among those present, none asked. Why was this? Because, within the assembly, none had any doubts.

Then Aniruddha, the Buddha's chief disciple with divine vision, scrutinizing the minds of the assembled, said to the Buddha, "O World-honoured One, the moon can make us hot and the sun can be cold to us. The Buddha has told us that the Four Noble Truths should not make us different from each other. The Buddha has also told us that the reality of the Truth of suffering is that suffering, which is the inability to make ourselves happy, exists, that the reality of the defiling passions is the cause of that suffering and this cause is not different for any of us, that if suffering is extinguished then this cause is extinguished because, when a cause is eliminated, its fruits are also eliminated and that the path to eliminating it is, in reality, the Path of Truth and there is no other way. O World-honoured One, these monks have certainty and are free of doubts about the Four Noble Truths. If there is anyone within this assembly who has not yet accomplished what needs to be done then, upon seeing the Buddha enter parinirvana, let him give rise to feelings of pity for others. If you have already penetrated His Teachings you have heard what the Buddha has voiced which is to help ferry all to the Other Shore; it is as a flash of lightning seen in the night which helps one see the Way. If what needs to be done is already accomplished and you have already crossed the sea of suffering, keep just this thought in mind, the parinirvana of the World-honoured One is exactly the same as shouldering the burden of all ills!"

Although Aniruddha spoke these words, the assembly had all thoroughly penetrated the meaning of the Four Noble Truths. The World-honoured One, desiring to help all in this great assembly to realize certainty, spoke to them from His heart of great compassion,

"O you monks, do not harbour grief and woe within your bosoms. Were I to abide in this world for the space of

a whole kalpa I must still enter into eternal meditation; to remain for such a length of time, and not ultimately to depart, is an impossibility. The Teaching that to spiritually benefit yourself by training benefits others contains all; were I to abide longer there would still be no more to obtain from Me than this. As for those who should be able to ferry others to the Other Shore, if humans are in some heaven they have already been completely carried across; those not yet carried across have also all already created the cause for their being ferried; you yourselves are now already past this. O My disciples, the Principles which I have extended, expanded and employed are the Dharma-body of the Tathagata which always abides and is not extinguished, therefore you should realize that the world is not forever, of necessity we part from it, so do not cling to grief for the world is ever thus. Be diligent in your devotion to progress and quickly seek liberation; with the clarity of your discriminate wisdom and insight eradicate the darkness of delusion for the world is truly susceptible to fear and mistrust and wants strength and stability. Since I now enter into eternal meditation, you should strive to rid yourself of what I call 'the embodied self' as though it were something foul that was polluting you, for it is this illusory self which will sink down into the great ocean of birth, old age, disease and death. To get rid of it is like recovering from a bad illness. How can any of you, who has the wit to try, fail to feel anything but joy when you have freed yourself from the false ego for then you will have slain the malicious thief that it is?

O you monks, with wholehearted devotion always seek to get back on the path. All that is mutable or immutable in all worlds defeats and destroys the signs of uncertainty. Bring them to a halt! Do not ask Me to say more for the time is nigh when I would pass and I wish for my parinirvana. These are My last Teachings and instructions."

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# I am Glad to be a (human) Animal.

Rev. Daizui MacPhillamy, M.O.B.C.

[This article first appeared in  
*The Journal of the Order of  
Buddhist Contemplatives*, Spring  
1993.]

I can remember the strange feeling that came over me in a high school biology course when we were learning about the classification of plants and animals and I came to one that looked something like this:

species:	sapiens ("wise")
genus:	Homo (human types of the last few hundred thousand years)
family:	Hominid (human-like beings of the last few million years)
suborder:	Anthropoid (apes and their kin)
order:	Primate (monkeys, apes, lemurs, and the like)
class:	Mammal (warm blooded, furry, suckle their young)
subphylum:	Vertebrate ( backbone inside, squishy parts outside)
phylum:	Chordate (equipped with one central nerve cord)
kingdom:	Animal (wriggling things that eat other life).

I already knew that I was an animal, of course, but....but there had always been plenty of protective "buts": but the animal who could think, but the animal with a soul, but the animal whom God had given dominion over the other animals, but the animal who was the height of evolution, but the animal with free will who controlled his own destiny. At

that moment, I experienced for the first time that I was an animal, plain and simple. There I was, as easily classified as a field mouse or a clam, and most definitely just as much an animal as either. Creepy though this feeling was, it was also somehow liberating: it had the ring of simple truth and it cut through a lot of the complicated and baffling ideas my world had taught me.

### Personal Consequences of Acceptance of Being an Animal.

I have remembered that realisation from time to time in my Buddhist training, and, I think, deepened it a little over the years; it has been helpful. For one thing, it helps to counteract some of the guilts my culture taught me which are a hindrance to living the Buddhist life of all-acceptance and Preceptual ethics. The animal wants a full belly: guilt calls it gluttonous; the animal relieves itself: guilt calls it filthy; the animal seeks to mate: guilt calls it lustful; the animal wants to rest: guilt calls it lazy; and so on. What does guilt want of us? Are we to be something that never desires food, relief, sex, or rest? That's a plant! Come to think of it, many plants do some of those things, so perhaps we are to be a stone! Since it is quite clear that we are neither a vegetable nor a mineral, there must be something wrong with the idea that if we were "good", we would have the desires of one. When I apply this to Buddhism, it leads me to question what the difference is between the cessation of craving that characterises Enlightenment and the desirelessness of a stone.

When I accept being an animal, answers to these questions start to form. Of course I want a full belly, and there are decisions to be made about what to fill it with and how to eat without fuelling attachment. Of course I need to relieve myself, and there are decisions to be made about how to treat my personal "compost" so as not to impair the health and enjoyment of others. Of course sexual desire arises, and there are decisions to be made about what to do when this happens. Of course I wish to rest, and here, too, decisions need to be made that affect myself and others. Acknowledging that I am an animal seems to help me keep



the Precepts of Buddhism since I waste less energy on denying that I have some instinctual **animal** desires and can spend more energy on dealing with them ethically and allowing them to rise and fall naturally, without attachment. This acceptance also helps me to realise the unreality of the "self", for I stop fighting against awareness of the skandhas (particularly those of body, perception, and feeling) and begin to be able to view them with the mindfulness and dispassion which are necessary to dispel the illusion of self. When all this becomes second nature and one is fully acceptant of the **animal**, fully ethically responsible, fully unattached, and fully mindful, I think we may have that state to which Meditation Master Bankei referred when he said "My miracle is that when I feel hungry I eat, and when I feel thirsty I drink."<sup>1,4</sup>

The same can be said of our emotions, our tendency towards attachments, and our learned thoughts and behaviours. **Animals** get frightened; **we** get angry; **we** get confused; there are a lot of things **we** can't seem to understand; **we** are inclined to seek pleasure and to try to avoid pain; and what happens to **us** alters how **we** view the world and what **we** do within it. One of the questions often asked in Buddhism is "what is the origin of the 'roots': greed, anger, and ignorance?"; the answer usually given is that these things simply are, and that what is important is what we do with them. I find this somehow easier to understand when I recognise their foundations in my ethically-neutral **animalness**, wherein they are not problems, evil tendencies, or inner enemies, but simply natural attributes. It is what I do with these attributes that has ethical and meditative significance. It is not having these "roots" that causes karma; it is acting from them that does that. The roots cannot be cut by denying their existence or trying to make them go away; only all-acceptant mindfulness and meditation can cut them.

This approach also seems to simplify looking at bewildering personal problems: so often they can be reduced to the normal and natural mental and physical consequences of the conditioning this **animal** organism has experienced during its lifetime. As such, the "problems" are not the problem; the painful conditioned thoughts and

behaviours that plague us are simply consequences of earlier events, and, since no one can change the past, the issue now is how to understand and accept them well enough to have the wisdom to build new learning to replace the old. All of this seems very ordinary and normal when we view ourselves as animals.

While the inner benefits of accepting our animal-ness seems to be substantial, it is not an easy thing to do. Most of our habits and cultural assumptions are to the contrary. Even our language implies denial: can you think of a word which refers to all of the animal kingdom (including humans) which does not also have connotations of separateness from, and inferiority to, humans? "Sentient beings" is nice, but as there is increasing evidence that plants have some sort of sensation, it may be too inclusive. This is why I have taken to printing the word "animal" and its pronouns in different typeface when I refer to all of us and to using the word "animal" in the normal typeface when I wish to refer to the nonhuman members of the animal kingdom. Another force for denial is that it goes against a certain natural sense of self-importance to really experience oneself fully as an animal. Just as we humans tend to view ourselves, our family, our band/tribe/nation, our religion, our race, etc. as more important than those of other humans, so we naturally view humanity as superior to other species of animals. But because such views are natural, does that make them true or wise from the point of view of Buddhist Preceptual ethics? Even as people of good will attempt to counteract their tendencies to selfishness, racism, sexism, and the like, should we perhaps also view "speciesism" as a similar prejudice to be recognised and resisted?

### Misunderstandings to be Avoided.

Suppose that we do view ourselves as animals; there would seem to be consequences not only for our own inner life but also for how we relate to our fellow animals. At the outset, let me mention two consequences that could arise from misunderstanding what has been said here, consequences that must be avoided at all cost. First, there have



been people who have made the mistake of thinking that if humans are **animals**, they should be "treated like animals". This sort of thinking usually occurs during times of social disorganisation in our species, and it often involves comparing some subgroup of humanity (the "enemy") with some generally despised nonhuman species (rats and monkeys being favourites). This human subgroup is then treated as badly as we have treated the animals with whom they are compared: they are rounded up and caged, involuntarily sterilised, slaughtered, experimented upon against their wills, and so forth. Pseudoscientific justifications involving "eugenic improvement", "racial purity", "ethnic cleansing", and the like are sometimes given. Clearly this is not a consequence of truly recognising our human oneness with **animals**; rather it is a major step backwards in Preceptual ethics to the position of not only separating ourselves from, and devaluing, **animals**, but also separating ourselves from, and devaluing, members of our own species. True recognition of our **animalness** leads to increased empathy and compassion for ourselves, our fellow humans, and all **animals**, not to the opposite!

The second misunderstanding is to equate acceptance of our **animal** nature with indulgence of our instinctual desires; it is to equate what is "natural" with what is "wise". Indeed, it is "natural", in the **animal** sense, to attempt to gratify instinctual desires, and the Twelve-fold Chain of Dependent Origination describes exactly what happens when we do so: we condemn ourselves to continual rounds of birth and death through craving and attachment. One way of looking at the purpose of Buddhism is that it provides a path (the Noble Eightfold Path to be precise) to rise above our desires, both **animal** and otherwise, and break the hold of the craving which results from habitual indulgence of them. The main point of this article is that, while Buddhism does not encourage us to indulge our **animal** nature, neither does it seek to deny its existence, but please do not lose track of the former point while we explore the latter one. Thus, when I speak of "acceptance", I am referring not to indulgence but rather to a full and honest awareness, to an equanimous mindfulness unimpeded by the delusions of indulgence and craving as well as by those of guilt, prejudice, self-importance, and so forth.

## Consequences of Acceptance for Human Issues.

Assuming that we understand and accept our animal nature accurately and avoid these two ghastly mistakes, there are some interesting and, I think, positive questions which arise regarding our thoughts and behaviours towards both human and non-human animals. I will not presume to tell you what to believe regarding these issues, but I will attempt to raise a sampling of them as useful questions in Buddhist Preceptual ethics.

First, a few of the issues regarding our fellow humans. The obvious first one is to apply what was said earlier regarding one's expectations of oneself to one's expectations of other humans. Some of the behaviour that we don't like in others is less apt to be viewed as "evil" if we can recognise its roots in our common animalness. That doesn't mean that we need to go along with it: as we have just noted, modifying some aspects of our animal behaviour is part of what human culture and religion is all about. But we're more likely to successfully influence both ourselves and others in positive ways if we exercise understanding and acceptance. Take for example the basic problems of greed, anger and ignorance: if they are simply part of being animal and are not of themselves evil, then what is? Is there such a thing as fundamental human evil?

Here is a more global issue: that of war. Most social animals would seem to be territorial and will fight to expand their territory as their populations expand or as resources dwindle. Does this apply to humans? If so, should the members of our band/tribe/nation devote more of our limited resources to assisting in world human population control and resource development and less to short-term military and diplomatic solutions to conflict? But given that human population expansion is still out of control and resources continue to be depleted, can our band/tribe/nation afford to cut back too much on its military preparedness? And if war between human bands/tribes/nations is normal under our current conditions, does that make it ethically acceptable for you or me



to support it or participate in it? If not, what is the alternative?

What about crime? Should we be surprised that humans who are raised without any nurturant and caring adult sometimes fail to develop empathic bonding to the rest of our species and become predatory upon it? Is this due to evil, an inherited or learned criminal nature, a mental illness, or simply to how social bonding develops amongst us primates? Here's another one: are the youth gangs currently found around the world among boys of all races and backgrounds really caused by drugs, poverty, and social injustice, or by the natural tendency of adolescent male Anthropoids, when excluded from the rewards of membership in the dominant social group, to coalesce into predatory bands whenever contrary conditioning has not been strong enough to suppress this? Or is it maybe a combination of these factors?

### Consequences of Acceptance for Animal Issues.

#### Human "superiority".

There are, of course, also implications for our relations to the rest of the animal kingdom. There is one general implication which might best be explored first. Our natural human bias towards ourselves, our "speciesism" as we called it above, usually leads us to assume that the human is the most advanced, important, and generally valuable species in the universe. This, in turn, has guided much of our thinking and behaviour towards other species. If, for a moment, we attempt to set speciesism aside, this assumption is open to challenge. Is there some objective meaning for "advanced"? One objective definition could refer to being biologically most numerous at present, but, if I remember correctly, it is some type of ant that takes the honours there. If we mean the most ancient species still around, we lose under the landslide of sponges, jellyfish, clams, and the like. If we mean the one undergoing most rapid current evolution, then something like the killer bee would probably win. If we mean the species that has the most effect on the environment, we might win,... or perhaps we'd share the prize with some of the ocean planktons: them

for the positive influence and us for the negative. That seems a dubious basis for calling ourselves "advanced"! What we usually seem to do is to pick some attribute on which we differ from other animals (like intelligence, as we measure it) and say that this makes us more advanced, but I have a problem with that: all species have some attribute or another that distinguishes them from the others. Where is the objective basis for saying that our particular attribute is the one that defines "advancement"? As to being "important" or "valuable", these would seem to be similarly relative concepts. Certainly we are "valuable" to ourselves, but surely that would hold true whether we were humans or hyenas. If we are to seek for a measure of value that is beyond our own human biases, we must seek to step beyond ourselves, and that leads us to the realm of religion.

The Buddhist religion has some interesting and paradoxical things to say on this question of human importance. On the one hand, there is the teaching of the Six Worlds, of which the human is clearly said to be "highest", and the animal is, by implication, "lower". The main reason for this is that only the human is capable of consciously realising Enlightenment, renouncing the world, and attaining Buddhahood.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Buddhism clearly recognises the Buddha Nature of all things, within which all beings, and by implication all animals, are equal and perfect just as they are.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it teaches respect and even reverence for all animate life, even enjoining monks to avoid disturbing the soil and to filter their water so as not to take life unnecessarily.<sup>5</sup> What is going on here?

As usual, what appears to be paradoxical is probably not so, but rather is a pointing to complementary sides of a greater Truth, in this case the Truth of "all is One and all is different". The "all is One" side is expressed in the Buddha Nature of all beings, and this clearly implies not only a fundamental Oneness but a fundamental spiritual equality of all animals. Buddha Nature is Buddha Nature, and nowhere in the Scriptures is It said to be found in greater or lesser amounts or of more or less valuable types in different individuals or species. Hence the teachings of universal reverence and respect.



From the "all is different" side, it would be foolish and lacking in awareness to fail to notice that various species of **animals** differ in various ways, and that some of those differences have spiritual significance. This does not make one species better than another: just they are different. In particular, the spiritual training of us humans differs from non-humans in the extent to which we are able to consciously realise the Buddha Nature of all of **us**, to engage in aware, Preceptual decision-making, to enter the life of the Sangha, and to reach in our lifetime the state of Buddhahood. Thus, I believe, it is said that the human life is the highest in the sense that we have the greatest spiritual opportunities of all life. Whether any of us make use of these opportunities is, of course, another question. In fact, some Buddhist writers have asserted that it is even possible for a particular nonhuman **animal** to be spiritually more advanced than a particular human **animal**.<sup>1</sup>

Just as we try to refrain from thinking that individual people who have more opportunities than others are fundamentally "better", would we be wise to refrain from thinking of our species as fundamentally more valuable simply because we differ from other **animals** in the extent of our spiritual opportunities? Since the realm of the animals is one of the Six Worlds of Buddhist training, this means that valuable religious practice is possible for animals, just as it is for the inhabitants of the human realm, the heavens, the hells, etc. The training in each of the Six Worlds is said to be different, but training there is. The human realm is indeed characterised by greater opportunities than the other five Worlds; does that mean that its inhabitants have fundamentally greater worth?<sup>1</sup>

### Environmental Responsibility.

Suppose for a moment that we accept the notion that we are all **animals** together, with none of **us** spiritually more valuable than another, and with humans having both the opportunity of Preceptual ethical decision-making and also the ability to influence the global environment in massive ways. It would seem to follow logically that we have an awesome responsibility to do the best that we can for **us**

all. If this is true, it may well be a responsibility of considerable spiritual significance, one that we would each be well advised to address. How to do this wisely is perhaps one of the most urgent and most general questions of our relationship to all life.<sup>3</sup>

### Vegetarianism.

Now for some questions about specific aspects of our relationship with other animals. What about vegetarianism? Many Buddhists seek to be vegetarian to some degree and this certainly is consistent with a recognition of our Oneness with the other animals. One tries not to harm those who are perceived as being similar to oneself and for whom one is able to feel empathy. But this is not as simple as it seems. Consider that the next step beyond feeling Oneness with all animals is to include the plant kingdom and experience Oneness with, and empathy for, all life. Yet we animals cannot live without eating other things. Where do we draw the line? At one extreme are people who will eat anything they can catch, including other humans; next come those who refrain from cannibalism, but that's as far as they go; some people draw the line at eating apes, but will dine on monkeys; then there are those who will not eat primates but will eat other mammals; some will eat fish and fowl but not mammals; others will consume invertebrates but not vertebrates; some will eat animal products only if they were not likely to have been killed specifically for them; yet others will eat only plants. And then we come back to the question of what is to be done by those people who truly feel a deep empathy for all life? For some of them an interesting thing happens: it becomes less a matter of the biological category of the food and more a question of the individual circumstances of its history and the uses to which its nutritive energy are to be put. For example, assuming the uses are worthy ones (and if they are not there is a question of whether a meal should be taken at all), such a person may find it ethically preferable to buy and eat an animal by-product close to its expiration date (for which the animal was clearly not slaughtered and which will be thrown out if not purchased soon) then to go into the garden and pull up a live carrot. What do you think?<sup>3</sup>



No matter where you draw the line nagging questions can still arise. If one is primarily vegetarian but eats eggs, is it ethically preferable to eat infertile eggs laid in the misery of a battery henhouse or to eat fertile ones laid in the freedom of a free-range barnyard? If one eats dairy products, to what extent does one share responsibility for the slaughter of the calves produced in order to keep milk flowing and the slaughter of the dairy cows when past their prime? If we are totally vegetarian, what shall we do if someday we are unfortunate enough to find that some animal foods are necessary to sustain our life? If we habitually eat meat, is it acceptable to go to the store and buy a cut of an animal which was not killed specifically for us but which was killed to provide such cuts of meat generally, which spent most of its life in a feedlot or factory farm, and which had to wait in terror as those in front of it were slaughtered? Is that better or worse than learning how to hunt well and then personally and respectfully killing for meat an animal which spent its entire life in freedom until the momentary agony of one clean shot through the heart? The Buddha clearly indicated that to go out and personally kill for meat was wrong livelihood; would He view the modern meat consumer's participation in our animal marketing system as better or worse?<sup>1</sup>

### Animal Experimentation.

What about scientific experimentation? Is it wise to oppose all scientific experimentation on nonhuman animals? Certainly they are not volunteers, which is a prime ethical requisite for human experimental subjects. Should we then also oppose experimentation on human animals, despite the benefits which have accrued to us all from, for example, double-blind testing of new medical therapies? If we do not oppose human research, then is there not also a role for the use of other animals, perhaps under stricter ethical guidelines than are used today? Should guidelines include provisions that only research of major significance justifies the use of inherently involuntary nonhuman subjects? Which of us is wise enough to know in advance what scientific research will ultimately prove to be of lasting benefit to living beings? If we oppose animal

research, whether human or nonhuman or both, what is our ethical responsibility for the suffering and death of those animals who could have benefitted from research delayed or never done?<sup>1</sup>

## Pets.

Then there is the question of pets. Are they nonhuman friends or are they captives? I am reminded of a turtle of my acquaintance who was passive and apparently friendly in the pet store, allowing himself to be picked up and stroked without any struggle, but who, when released into a pond of adequate size, would dive for cover at the first sight of an approaching human. This was a captive animal whose apparent friendship seems to have been a type of catatonic state induced by the inescapability of his captivity. If our pets are friends and we live in circumstances in which they cannot be completely themselves, then how far shall we go in demanding accommodations from them to our life style? On the one hand, at some point accommodation slides over into captivity; on the other hand, we expect some degree of accommodation from our human family and friends and we certainly accommodate some of our own behaviour for the benefit of our pets, so may we not ask them to accommodate us? Is it wise to refrain from having a pet if our circumstances would require him or her to be unduly captive, or is it better to provide a home to an animal that would otherwise be killed, even if that home is less than optimal? If we live in circumstances in which our nonhuman friends can more or less do what they please, then what responsibility do we have to the local native animals, amongst whom we have brought our non-native, and often carnivorous, friend? In these circumstances (which are arguably the best for our pets) would it be preferable to have no pet at all but rather try to live at harmony with, and possibly befriend, the native nonhumans of the area? And what are we to do about pet population control? Is it ethical to impose our ideas of population control onto our nonhuman friends through involuntary castration? It hardly seems the friendly thing to do, and we know how humans feel when someone tries that on us. But is it even worse not to do so, thus creating conditions



of immense suffering for the homeless beings born to our animal friends? Is the issue one of manipulation and "playing God" or is it one of recognition and acceptance of a particular difference between species: the difference being that the human species happens to be able to figure out the connections between sexual intercourse and birth and between birth and the sufferings inherent in over-population?<sup>1</sup>

### I am Glad to be a (human) Animal.

I am glad to be a (human) animal, with all the liveliness and opportunities to train towards Enlightenment we wriggling things are heir to. If birth and death, instinctual desires, the need to feed on other life, and tendencies towards both attachment and self-centred attitudes come with this animal package, then I am happy to do the best I can with them. And, have no doubt about it, I am very grateful to be a human being, with all of the immense opportunities and responsibilities that go with it. I am glad that among these opportunities is that of being able to treat ourselves and our fellow animal beings with awareness, acceptance, and respect. I am glad that we can ask each other these kinds of questions, and I pray that doing so may bring us a little closer to the "wisdom" for which we have named our species.

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### Notes.

1. Paul Reps, ed., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, undated), p. 68.
2. The issue of the place of natural or instinctual desires within Buddhist training has some complex aspects, such as whether all such desires are permanently extinguished at the Arahant stage or whether it is the greed for sense desire that is extinguished and the basic desires, while they may still arise, have no power to produce unenlightened mental or physical action. Fortunately, such questions have

no direct implications for the conduct of our daily training, and Scriptures such as *The Scripture of Great Wisdom* point out that all such things are, in their fundamental nature, void, unstained and pure. For more thoughts on the issue of training with one's natural desires, see the article by Rev. Haryō Young in the previous issue of this *Journal*.

3. The Priory can suggest and supply further reading from previous issues of *The Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives* which address the issues raised at these points.

4. Great Master Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō* (*The Eye and Treasury of the True Law*), trans. Kōsen Nishiyama, 4 vols. (Sendai, Japan: Daihokkaikaku Publ. Co., 1975) Vol. 1, pp. 137 & 138; Great Master Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, trans., Kōsen Nishiyama and John Stevens (Tokyo: Nakayama Shobō, 1977) Volume 2, pp. 80-85.

5. I.B. Horner, trans., *The Book of the Discipline* (London: Pali Text Society), Volume 2, pp. 223 - 225 & 261 - 262; Volume 3. pp. 1 - 4.

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# The Rich Man's Son.

Retold by Rev. Fristan Skinner, Priest-trainee.

*In the Lotus Scripture, this parable is spoken by Subhuti, Maha-Katyayana, Maha-Kasyapa and Maha-Maudgalyayana, to express their gratitude and wonder at the Buddha's infinite compassion, in which we all share. As it is the story of these four great trainees, so, on some level, it may be considered the story of every trainee; hence the re-telling.*

See me now, in these fine clothes, you'd hardly believe the rags I used to wear. But then, if you look closely, you'll notice strange lines under my eyes, or perhaps see the scars on my hands. Yes, for those with eyes to see, the past has certainly left its traces. What was that past? You want to know? Well sit down then, and listen.

When I was a young man, hardly past boyhood, I ran away from my father. He was rich and I lacked for nothing, so why did I go? Well, you could say I was a fool who listened to fools, with their stories of foreign cities and wild adventures. That was part of it, certainly. But the truth is, I had to go. The world was unknown to me. I had to explore, to find my place in it. "After all," I thought, "this is a child's life. It's time for me to become a man."

So, one spring morning, before even the birds began their chorus, I tiptoed out of my chamber and past the sleeping servants. Not a chink came from the bag of money on my shoulder. The marble stairs didn't betray my feet. The gate latch forgot its creaky voice. Then, there I was, out on the dust of the road.

My spirits were high and my heart was singing as I threw up a stick to decide a direction. By the time the sun had lifted its head over the edge of the world, I was miles away. Each tree, each house was fascinating and new as I rejoiced in my freedom. The very rises and falls in the road were like the phrases of an intoxicating melody. On and on I walked; on and on the music rolled; on and on the world spread itself before me.

So what did I do with my new freedom? Well, to start with, I studied those great ones whose names are on the lips

of the world. I followed the poets, the adventurers, the great thinkers, the great leaders. What they did, I did. What they thought, I thought. My friends, my tastes, even my clothes were as theirs. I finally made myself a parrot, repeating their opinions as my own. I did all this, and still the world did not consider me great.

Now, aping the great is an expensive business. I soon found my bag of money sitting lightly against my hip. Then my study changed. Now I watched the rich, and copied them. Where they invested, I invested. Where they sold, I sold. Yes, I made a little money. But I lost a fortune.

I remember sitting slumped in a ramshackle room, a final gold coin in my pocket, trying to make sense of life, trying to find a way forward. Something in my heart whispered, "Return to your father." But I remembered hearing in some tavern or roadhouse that he had moved his household to another place. I daresay I could have found out where he was but, "What welcome would be waiting there for a spendthrift fool?" I thought. "Running away with a sackful of his money and not even a word of farewell, who could forgive such ingratitude?"

No, I had to find work. That was the only way.

By the next day my final coin was spent. An empty stomach and a cold night slumbering in a doorway sharpened my resolve. But in a town that can spot a penniless stranger at a glance, it's hard enough to find a kindly face, let alone a position. You can guess the number of doors closed in my face, the number of backs turned. Just one person, an elderly widow, took pity and gave me half a loaf of bread. Later in the day she sent a nephew of hers looking for me with a couple of days work carrying wood.

Well, that gave enough money to put me back on my journey. Even if I could, I won't drag out the details of the next few years, wandering here, working there. Suffice to say that the roads were hard and the cities harder. Always it was a struggle to get enough food to keep on working, enough work to keep on eating. Before, I'd been a pleasant featured young man, now I became a walking skeleton, covered with scabs and sores. In the dull pain of hunger, even hope was too heavy a burden. I had only two things left: my life and my freedom.



One day, I shuffled up to a great house. I peered into the courtyard. A great crowd surrounded an old man seated on a lion couch. His feet rested on a jewelled footstool, and precious pearls hung on his body. To left and right, attendants with fly whisks waited upon him, while others sprinkled perfumes on the earth. Above, a precious canopy, hung with streamers of flowers, kept off the sun. In front of the great man, members of the crowd were paying their respect and laying out gold and silver for his inspection. Some he accepted, others not.

For a moment he looked up and saw me standing in the gateway. Our eyes met. I panicked, "This is no place for me", I thought, "If I don't watch it, I'll end up enslaved." I turned and ran. I'd hardly covered ten yards when out rushed a couple of servants. They grabbed at me. "Hey, let me go." I shouted. "I've done nothing wrong." They gripped all the harder, started dragging me back. I thought of captivity, slavery, death. Then I fainted away.

I woke up, laid out on the ground. Someone had thrown a bucket of water over me. A servant said, "You're free to go where you will." I didn't need telling twice. Before they changed their minds, I was off. I headed for the nearest village, the sort of place where you could get a couple of days work without anyone trying to lock you up.

I'd hardly arrived when two scruffy types turned up. One of them had lost an eye. "You looking for work?" he said.

"Yes."

"We need a third man to work with us up at one of the big houses; shovelling dung. There's a rush on so it's double wages."

So off we went, through the fields to the outhouses at the back. Well, I'd done plenty of worse jobs and the food wasn't bad. At night I slept under a tree outside the village. But then, a couple of days later, just by chance, I went around to the front of the house and into the courtyard, to take water from the fountain. I looked up. It was the same place where they tried to capture me. My heart started banging like a drum. "This is some trap," I thought. I dropped my buckets, made a run for the gate. Out on the road a few crows flew up squawking. Nothing else moved. I turned round. No-one came after me. I stood

there, puffing and wheezing, eyeing the gateway. Still nothing.

Ten minutes later I began to wonder whether I'd made a mistake. A few minutes after that I shrugged, went back into the yard and picked up my buckets again.

I was still on my guard and wouldn't take any chances, certainly wouldn't go into the house. Every night I was out of the place before nightfall, and back to the village. But a couple of weeks later, an old foreman type turned up and said, "If you work hard, there's a regular job for you here, son. You don't seem lazy and grumbling like the rest of this crew. I'm going to up your pay. Whatever you need, just ask for it. There's an old shed you can have for a room, if you like, and a worn out servant you can use. I've taken quite a shine to you. Treat me as you would your own father."

You can imagine, I was pretty pleased how things were turning out. For the next few years, I was their regular dung shoveler. My time on the road had made me very wary of getting into dangerous positions, but, after a bit, I didn't even mind going into the house on my collection round.

The biggest surprise of that time was when I realised that the old foreman was actually the master of the house. It seemed he didn't mind putting on old rags and coming down to see how the servants were doing. Quite often, I'd see him, in his finery, pearls hanging on his body. Always he'd have a smile, or a kind word for me, and he always called me "son".

Well, the years went by and then one day the master called me to him and said, "You've been here a good while now, my son. I want to give you a new job. I need a steward, someone who knows what we've got in the granaries and treasuries, someone to control all the incomings and outgoings in the household and make sure there's no waste. Will you do it?"

By that time I'd learned to love the old man. Of course, I took the job. It was years since I'd done any head work, but I gradually found my way through the account books. Then I studied the fabulous wealth in the silver treasury, the gold treasury, and the jewel treasury, not to mention the five granaries.

It took a long time, but eventually I knew the wealth and workings of the entire household. To me the farmers would come, wanting to discuss their harvests. I would see our debtors and draw up the arrangements. If a barn needed repairing, I would employ the workmen. Mind you, I was still on the same wages, and still sleeping in the old shed. Not that I'm complaining, in fact quite the opposite. If you'd asked me what more I wanted, I'd have said I was completely satisfied with the wages, the house, the master, everything.

Then one day a surprise. Walking into the courtyard, I found it full of people. In the middle, seated on his lion couch, was the master of the house. As I'd seen him before, his feet rested on a jewelled footstool and precious pearls hung on his body. Attendants sprinkled flowers and perfumes on the earth. Next to the master, beside the fountain, there was an empty space.

He saw me, and beckoned. "Sit down here, beside me," he said. The gathered crowd fell silent. The master put his hand on my head. His voice trembled with joy. "This man is blood of my blood. This is my son and I am his father. Fifty years ago he ran away from me to find misery and suffering. Now he is here again. Everything in my granaries and treasuries, all of it he knows, and all that is mine, is his."

In my amazement, all those years shovelling dung passed before me. I saw my father's patience, waiting, waiting for me to trust him again. Me, who was satisfied with a day's pay for a day's work. Now I realised how my father wanted me to share in his incredible wealth. Gratitude flooded through me, I could say nothing.

So now you see me, back in my rightful place, son of the house. But now I must return to the house, for there is much work to be done.

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*[This retelling owes much to the commentary on the Lotus Scripture by Rev. Master Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C. "The Parable of the Rich Man's Son" is covered on Throssel Hole Priory Meditation Groups Lecture Tape A9.]*



# Congregation Day 1993.

Jim Gore-Langton writes:

If I had to pick one word that described Congregation Day this year, it would be 'light'. The Mechanic's Hall at Marsden was light and airy, the surrounding hills had their own special light, the altar seemed almost to glow in its own light, and the feeling of the whole day was light, relaxed and warm. A very special day, a pleasure to recall.

Early morning – the weather looks O.K.; overcast, but it probably won't rain – lots of preparations to finish before everyone arrives. Willing hands working hard – building the altar, moving chairs, clearing the rubbish from the courtyard. Hope we get it all done.

The decoration of the altar is finished – it looks magnificent; a gleaming yellow altar cloth, a golden Buddha with a glowing halo. A still focus for the day. Everything's ready, and people are arriving. Welcome cups of tea all round.

Reverend Master Daishin gives a Dharma talk – time to sit still and listen. Afterwards there is a short break before celebrating the Festival Memorial for Great Master Dōgen. With two minutes to spare we get the portable organ connected to the loudspeaker – it works. A hush falls as the precentor's bell is heard. My young children sit still and attentive watching

the beautiful ceremony, listening to the singing. They only drop their toys once. I feel the stillness within – a joy to be with you all, here, today.

Everyone is chatting, looking at the photoboard of the Priory, wondering what to buy at the bookshop. Children appear in the amazing dragon masks they have been making. Tables loaded with delicious food appear, and in a short while we're all balancing full plates on our knees. Someone does a quick head count. About ninety altogether – more than we thought, but the hall is just the right size. You can see the green hills through the window.

In the afternoon most people want to go for a stroll. We set off in little groups through the village, and along the canal towpath. The water is very still, and reflects the banks of heather in their glorious purple bloom. Where the canal disappears into a tunnel under the Pennines, we linger on a bridge....I look forward to seeing the photos.

Back for more tea and biscuits – I won't get round to talk to everyone I'd like to, but I've managed quite a few. And, impossibly soon, the day is almost over, and everyone is saying goodbye.

Many thanks to Reverend Master Daishin, all the monks, and everyone who came – and to all who worked hard to make the day a great success. Best wishes for next year's Congregation Day in Edinburgh.

# News.

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## Monastic Events

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: On September 4th, Ian White was ordained by Rev. Master Daishin. He was given the monastic name Hōun Galen, meaning "Healing Peace of the Dharma Cloud". Both of Ian's parents, along with other members of his family, attended the ceremony to witness this formal beginning to his monastic life. Later in the month, on September 21st, Rev. Baldwin Schreurs was installed as the new Head Novice, with Rev. Roland Watson as his assistant.

We wish Rev. Galen, Rev. Baldwin and Rev. Roland every success.

Rev. Jigen returned to the Priory in July after her year's visit to Shasta Abbey. It's good to have her back with us.

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## Talks & Retreats

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: Monks from the Priory have visited Stoke, Huddersfield, Harrogate, Newcastle and Aberdeen in recent months to lead retreats and give public talks, or to visit the meditation groups. We have also visited two local schools - one in Alston, the other in Gateshead - to lead their assemblies.

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## Teachers Courses

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: In June we held two one-day courses for school teachers. The courses were an attempt to provide information and support, in a practical and lively way, for those teachers trying to include Buddhism in their Religious Education syllabus. Thirty teachers attended over the two days and we were very grateful for the assistance of three lay ministers - Karen Richards who helped on the first day, and Stephanie de Rome Garnett and Mark Boyne who travelled from the south of England to help on the second day. The response to the



courses was extremely encouraging and we held two further courses in October – the first was another introductory day, and the second was a follow-up course to provide more ideas for classwork; twenty-nine teachers attended.

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**Calendar  
Change**

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: Please note the following two changes to our 1994 calendar:-

The 'Festival of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva' will be on 21st February, rather than the 20th as shown; and 'Remembrance Day' will

be on 11th November, not the 13th.

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**In Gratitude**

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: We would like to thank all those who give so generously to help support the Priory. Among donations recently

received have been a bookcase, table and chairs; two bronze Japanese lanterns, a dragon incense burner and a brass Chinese bell. The garden has received cuttings and the kitchen is very grateful for all the donations of food. The Bookshop would like to thank Dörte Haarhaus for her help in doing the Bookshop catalogue layout on her computer. Thank you all very much.

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**Begging  
Bowl**

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: In preparation for the gardens which will be planted in front of The Hall of Pure Offerings – as the new kitchen building is to be known – the garden would appreciate donations of hardy shrubs and perennials. Cut-

tings from your own gardens would be most welcome. We have a list of suitable plants. For details please contact Rev. Berwyn.

If you have an electric typewriter you no longer need, we could put it to good use. We would also appreciate a weather-resistant, wooden bench or chair for use in the cemetery. This is to make it possible for people to meditate, or to just sit quietly in the cemetery without having to wait for days when the grass is dry!

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Telephoning  
the Priory

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: Please make phonecalls to the Priory by telephoning (0434) 345204 between the hours of 9.30 a.m. – 11.20 a.m., and 2.30 p.m. – 4.30 p.m. on days when we are open for business. (These are all days except the 4th, 9th, 14th, 19th, 24th and 29th of each month.) For emergencies, we are available at anytime and if our answerphone is on we will get back to you as soon as we can.

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## Making Offerings of Candles and Incense

Visitors to the Priory are welcome to offer incense on their arrival or during their stay, as a way of showing respect and gratitude to the Buddhas and Ancestors. This is a traditional practice when visiting Buddhist temples or shrines.

There is also the opportunity to transfer merit by making the offering of a lit votive candle. The candles are available in the small side-shrines in the Ceremony Hall and can be offered in memory of those who have died or for anyone for whom the offering of merit would be of help.

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# Reading Buddhist Priory News

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## Ceremonies

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: There continues to be a Festival Ceremony and Dharma talk on the first Sunday of each month with the opportunity for people to stay on at the Priory into the afternoon. There have been Lotus Ceremonies in June and July, and the Festival of Kṣtigarbha Bodhisattva on the 1st August. The Naming Ceremony for Mateusz Winter, 17 month old son of Krysha and David Winter from London, was performed just before the Festival Memorial for Great Master Eihei Dōgen on the 5th September. We are delighted to welcome Mateusz into the Sangha.

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## Priory News

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: Our heartfelt congratulations to Ian White, now Rev. Galen, on the event of his Ordination. Rev. Galen was a stalwart member of the congregation at Reading and at the Norwich group; we wish him well in his life as a monk. During the summer the Priory has had new guttering and double glazing fitted at the rear of the house; the chimney has been removed to attic level, and a new bathroom suite is now installed – a second toilet being a welcome addition.

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## Outside Events

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: The annual picnic at Wellington Country Park in July was very well attended. In the morning we walked through the deer park, ate a hearty lunch, and afterwards many ventured into assorted craft for a cruise around the lake. The day was rounded off with tea and icecream.

As well as the usual visits to the groups in the south, Rev. Mugō made her annual visits to Telford, for a group evening, and to the Norwich Group for a weekend. Many thanks for the most generous hospitality.



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## Priory Weekend Camp

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: In August Rev. Mugō and Rev. Mildred, along with a diverse group of about 30 people and a dog, gathered at a campsite in Wick near Glastonbury for the first Reading Camp. A spacious part of the campsite, with a beautiful view was reserved for the group. The fit and adventurous ones camped in tents, one couple stayed in a caravan, and yet others spent Friday and Saturday nights in nearby Bed & Breakfast accommodation. In this way everybody from one and a half year old Mateusz to his eighty year old great-grandmother were able to attend. We were fortunate to have fine weather, good facilities and a heated swimming pool. It was especially pleasing that so many non-Buddhist partners and children of congregation members could spend time together in an informal relaxed setting. As well as walks to the Tor and



Some of the happy campers!

Chalice Well and sightseeing trips to Glastonbury and Wells, we had many impromptu group events: games, stories and singing in the evenings, and Sunday morning saw everybody off on a Treasure Hunt.

We thank everybody who came for the weekend and helped to organise and make it a success.

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### In Gratitude

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: Among the many welcome food items received have been tempeh and tofu, fresh fruit and vegetables, tea biscuits and two boxes of chocolates, and a steady supply of date slices. And for the library, clear plastic book covering. A special thankyou to those who have freely offered their professional expertise during the past two months.

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### Begging Bowl

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: We would very much appreciate a clothes dryer. A second hand one in good working order would be gratefully received and would be especially helpful during the wet winter months.

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# Throssel Hole Priory Bookshop.

## HOW TO GROW A LOTUS BLOSSOM or How a Zen Buddhist Prepares for Death.

We are pleased to announce the publication of the second edition of this book by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, which has not been available for many years. The revised and expanded edition has completely new drawings that help the reader grasp the nature of the visions described in the text.

The first part of the book (Book I) is a verbal and pictorial diary of Rev. Master's spiritual experiences in 1976 after she was told by a doctor that she had only three more months to live. It describes, in terms of her own experience, what in Zen Buddhism is called the third kenshō and is invaluable in clarifying the purpose of Buddhist training in the broadest sense.

Book II depicts and describes a number of her visions that occurred in the years following 1976. As is mentioned in the introduction to this section, these later visions are directed more toward teaching her how to live in, and be of help to, the world of everyday life from within the Precepts and Oneness with the Unborn, while the earlier ones were a means by which she learned to realise more deeply the Unborn Buddha Nature.

*Shasta Abbey Press, 1993, 272 pp. £14.95.  
The price includes postage & packing within  
the U.K.*

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